

## The Roman Road

A short walk with Pastor Will.

The Roman Empire was all about roads! They built about 75,000 miles of roads (3 times the circumference of the earth!) to move armies, commercial goods, and civilians as efficiently as possible. Engineers drained marshes, fell forests, cut into mountains, built bridges across rivers, and more in order to build the straightest roads possible, aligning along ridges and watersheds wherever possible, usually changing direction sharply at the highest points.

The roads were built on solid foundations, with cambered surfaces to facilitate drainage, and covered with pavers or a type of concrete (made from volcanic ash). The Empire provided regular security patrols and built rest stops or inns every 10 miles.

Britain's first proper roads were built by the Romans.

These roads were also key to the early spread of the Gospel message, as long distance travel was relatively convenient and safe.

There is one particular Roman Road with which I'd like you to become familiar. It's not a physical road, but a literary one, that winds through Paul's Letter to the Church in Rome. It's all contained in a single book of the New Testament, yet the seven stops we'll make along this road express the heart of the Good News message about Jesus.

Join me for a quick journey up this road to see how it all fits together.

**Rest Stop #1; Romans 3:23** - *For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard.*

This verse identifies the universal need of humanity—regardless of culture, language, age, or gender: we are incapable of saving ourselves by any stretch of imagination or effort. The future cannot erase the past, and our past is marked by our shortfalls.

The words translated as “sin” (both in Hebrew and in Greek) literally mean “to miss the mark.” Picture an archer who sets his arrow, pulls back the bowstring, and aims for the bullseye... but when he releases the arrow, it misses the mark. Whether by an inch or by a mile, he has missed the mark for which he aimed—that is the definition of sinning. Aiming (trying), but missing the target.

*“We all fall short...”* We want to do the right thing, we mean to do the right thing, but we miss, or we waffle and do the wrong thing anyway.

When we arrive at the next stop, 6:23, we discover that missing the mark morally is very costly.

**Rest Stop #2; Romans 6:23** - *For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Most people who measure their chance of going to Heaven after they die, lean on what they have earned through their good deeds, and hope the good will outweigh the bad.

Sins do, indeed, earn wages; they are not inconsequential. And the wages we earn is nothing short of death. Sin is a terminal condition. It's a fatal disease.

But in this verse, the "wages of sin" are contrasted with the "free gift of God." One is earned, but the other is altogether undeserved. This gift is absolutely free—from the start, all the way to the end.

It is free to you and me because its price was paid in full on our behalf by Christ Jesus the Lord. There is nothing we can do to gain eternal life on our own—only trust Christ Jesus as our Savior and thank Him for the gift of His grace.

This is amazing news! But how did Jesus do it? How did He pay our debt to provide eternal life? The next stop on the road reveals it...

**Rest Stop #3; Romans 5:8** - *But God showed His great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.*

This was an act of love for us, by God Himself! He sent Jesus to purchase our pardon and bring us home to God by dying for us—in our place—even when we were still sinning and unrepentant. What greater love could there be?

He didn't wait for us to fulfill our promises to improve. He just took care of it all for us by offering His sinless life in the place of our corrupted ones.

So what should our response be? When someone so earnestly declares their love to you, will you ignore it?

**Rest Stop #4; Romans 10:9-10** - *If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved.*

Reciprocating God's love by openly declaring your allegiance to Jesus is a powerful response to make. Especially when it is based on the confidence that He is alive to hear your announcement—raised from the dead by God's mighty power.

When you trust what God has done in raising up His Son, He is pleased. Your confidence is counted by God as righteousness—it puts you in right standing with God, as if you had never sinned.

And your declaration of faith seals the deal!

Declaration and confidence, confidence and declaration. It's a powerhouse combination that will change your life!

**Rest Stop #5; Romans 10:13** - *For "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."*

This verse reveals that God doesn't play favorites. The Good News is for everyone. Anyone—no matter your background, no matter your past—who calls on Him as Savior will be heard and accepted.

It's not what you can bring to the table to prove yourself worthy; it's the worthiness of Jesus who has already done everything required to redeem and save you. Trust Him for it. Call on Him for it.

What's the sure result?

**Rest Stop #6; Romans 8:1** - *So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus.*

If you've given your life to Jesus Christ, then you belong to Him, and He cares for His own.

All your real guilt—whether felt or ignored—and all the shame that you have carried... have been taken away! As far as the east is from the west. God has hurled your sins into the depths of the sea.

You need no longer dread the judgment to come, for He who saved you will not condemn you. You are now His beloved, and He is your Savior. He has set His love on you, and He will never leave you, nor abandon you.

How long is "never"? The final stop on the Roman Road clinches it for us.

**Rest Stop #7; Romans 8:38-39** - *And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Stuck like glue! He has inscribed your name on the palm of His hand—like an indelible tattoo.

Have you been afraid of death? Or afraid of life? No more! Angels and demons cannot interfere. Your fears of what may happen today, your worries about what may happen tomorrow—all are powerless to sever this relationship with the Savior.

Nothing above or beneath, nothing in all of creation will EVER be able to separate us from the love that God has revealed to us in the life, death, and resurrection of His Son, Christ Jesus our Lord.

Nothing. Ever.

So, that's the Good News in a nutshell. That's His story! It's a wonderful story. Will you ignore it? Or, will you thoughtfully respond? Lots of questions remain to be answered, but the path to discovery begins by engaging Jesus as your Guide.

Tell Jesus that you're sorry for spurning or ignoring Him, and ask Him to reveal Himself to you—in truth and life-transforming power. Begin following Him today. Contact us for further helps.